

From Data to Decisions

Building Project Presentations
that Impact and Influence



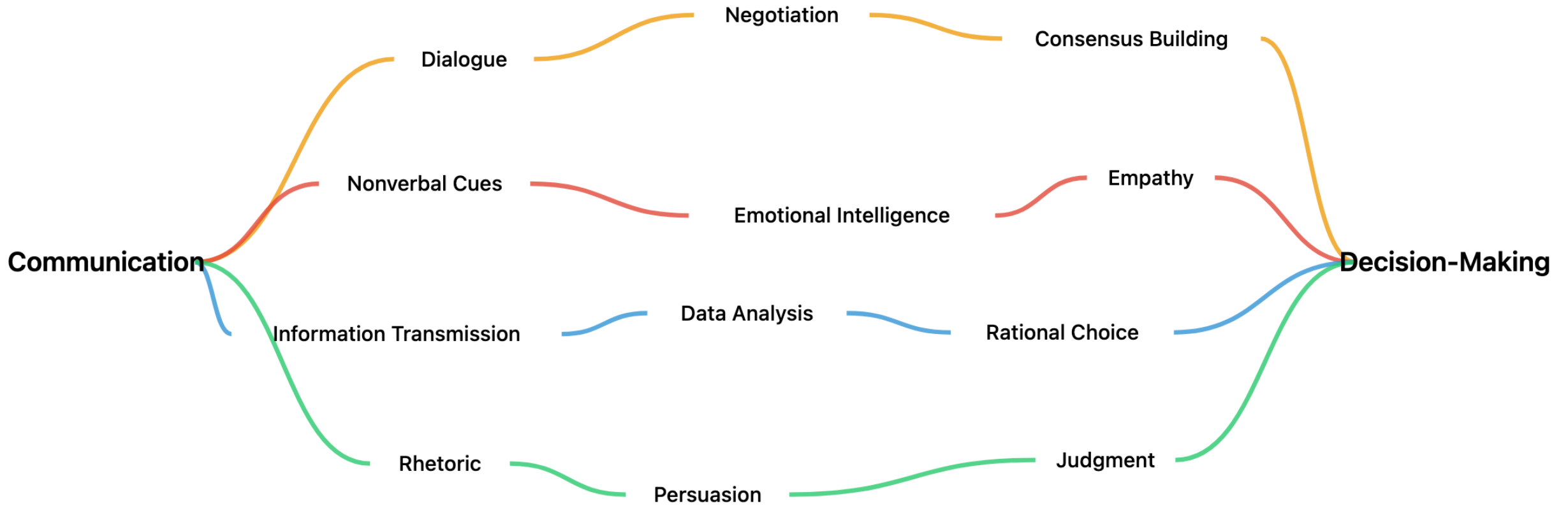
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{ Projects
& Data }



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Why This?



Source: Pathfinder - Concept Explorer - <https://matthewsiu.com/pathfinder>

From Data to Decisions

1. Structure Your Message
2. Design for Clarity
3. Tell the Data Story



1

Structure Your Message

→ People remember categories, not lists

Avoid Cognitive Overload



George Mandler (1924–2016)

Stakeholders don't remember details -
they remember categories

People could memorize information in categories and then retrieve it from memory perfectly if there were **one to three items in a category**.

Hence, the number of categories has a significant influence on the memory of a person.

“What’s the one thing I need to know?”

“What’s the risk to my decision?”

“What do you want me to do?”

Without Structure = Confusion & Delayed Decisions

Example:

“We have 12 risks: integration delays, vendor capacity, missing requirements, key people unavailable, budget tracking gaps...”

Project Risks

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K
	ID	Risk	Identified	Last Update	Description	Probability	Impact	Risk Score	Severity	Owner	Mitigation Steps
1	1	There is a risk that project pump unit explodes	3-Sep-20	7-Mar-20	Initial investigation has indicated that the project pump units are in need of an upgrade. There is a risk they will explode	1	3	3	Low	Manager	Get expert opinion, and look at costs for upgrade
2	2	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits telephone centre	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	The telephony staff are all located in one, badly-ventilated room. A swine flu outbreak would bring sales to a halt	2	5	10	High	Team 1	Get Tamiflu for whole team.
3	3	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits workers	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	Initial investigation has indicated that the project pump units are in need of an upgrade. There is a risk they will explode	5	5	25	Extreme	Jarvis	Holding text holding text
4	4	There is a risk that project pump unit explodes	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	The telephony staff are all located in one, badly-ventilated room. A swine flu outbreak would bring sales to a halt	2	2	4	Moderate	Elaine	Holding text holding text
5	5	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits telephone centre	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	Initial investigation has indicated that the project pump units are in need of an upgrade. There is a risk they will explode	5	5	25	Extreme	Mustafa	Holding text holding text
6	6	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits workers	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	The telephony staff are all located in one, badly-ventilated room. A swine flu outbreak would bring sales to a halt	3	3	9	High	George	
7	7	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits workers	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	Initial investigation has indicated that the project pump units are in need of an upgrade. There is a risk they will explode	2	2	4	Moderate	Jenny	
8	8	There is a risk that Swine Flu hits workers	23-Jun-20	6-Sep-20	The telephony staff are all located in one, badly-ventilated room. A swine flu outbreak would bring sales to a halt	1	1	1	Low		
9	9							0	None		
10	10							0	None		

With Structure = Clearer Understanding

Project Risks

Our risks fall into 3 buckets, with the main blocker in the Resource category

Resource Risks

Key Risk: (describe risk in more detail)
Mitigation: (approach to mitigate the risk)

Technical Risks

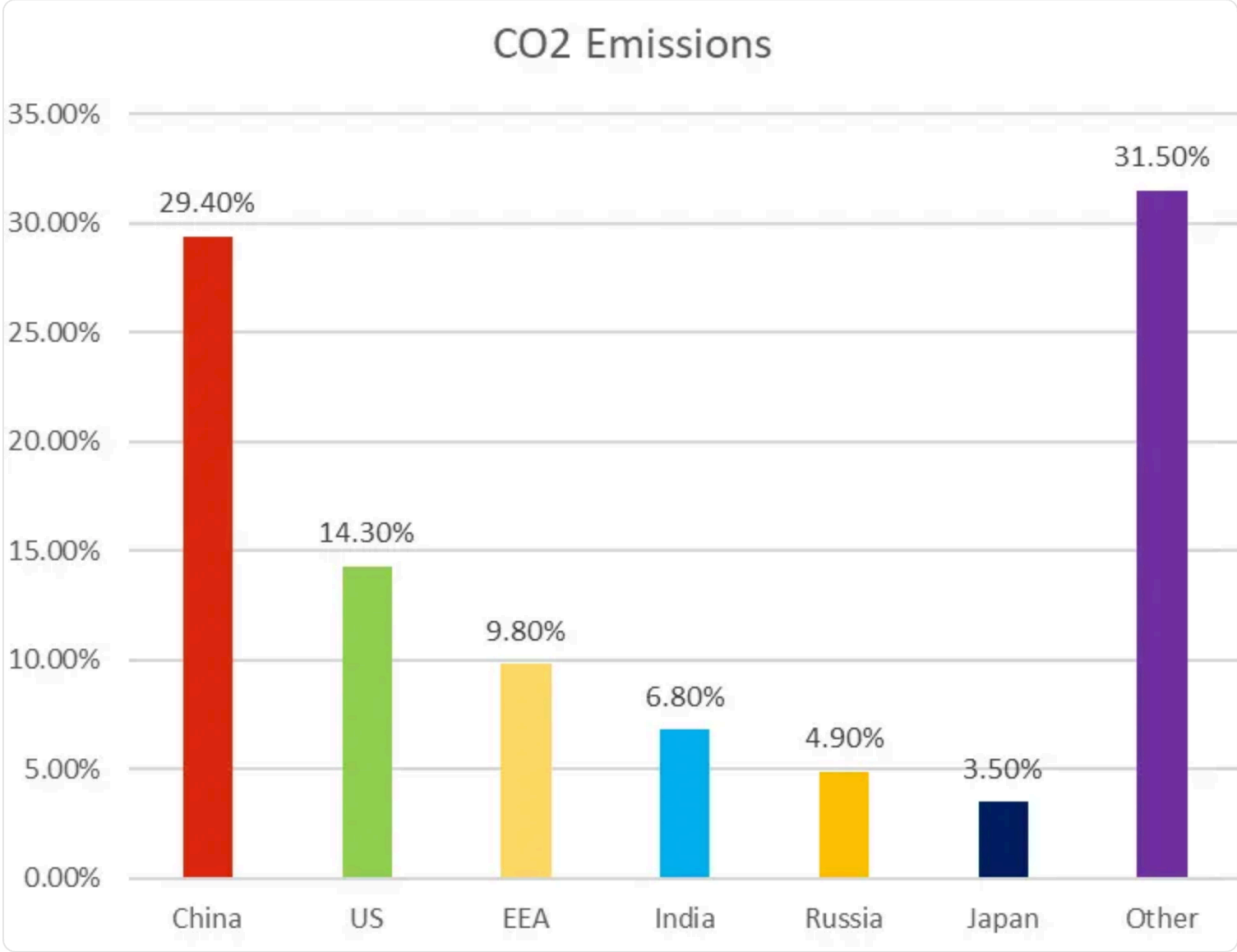
- **Risk 1:** (risk description)
- **Risk 2:** (risk description)
- **Risk 3:** (risk description)

External Risks

- **Risk 1:** (risk description)
- **Risk 2:** (risk description)
- **Risk 3:** (risk description)

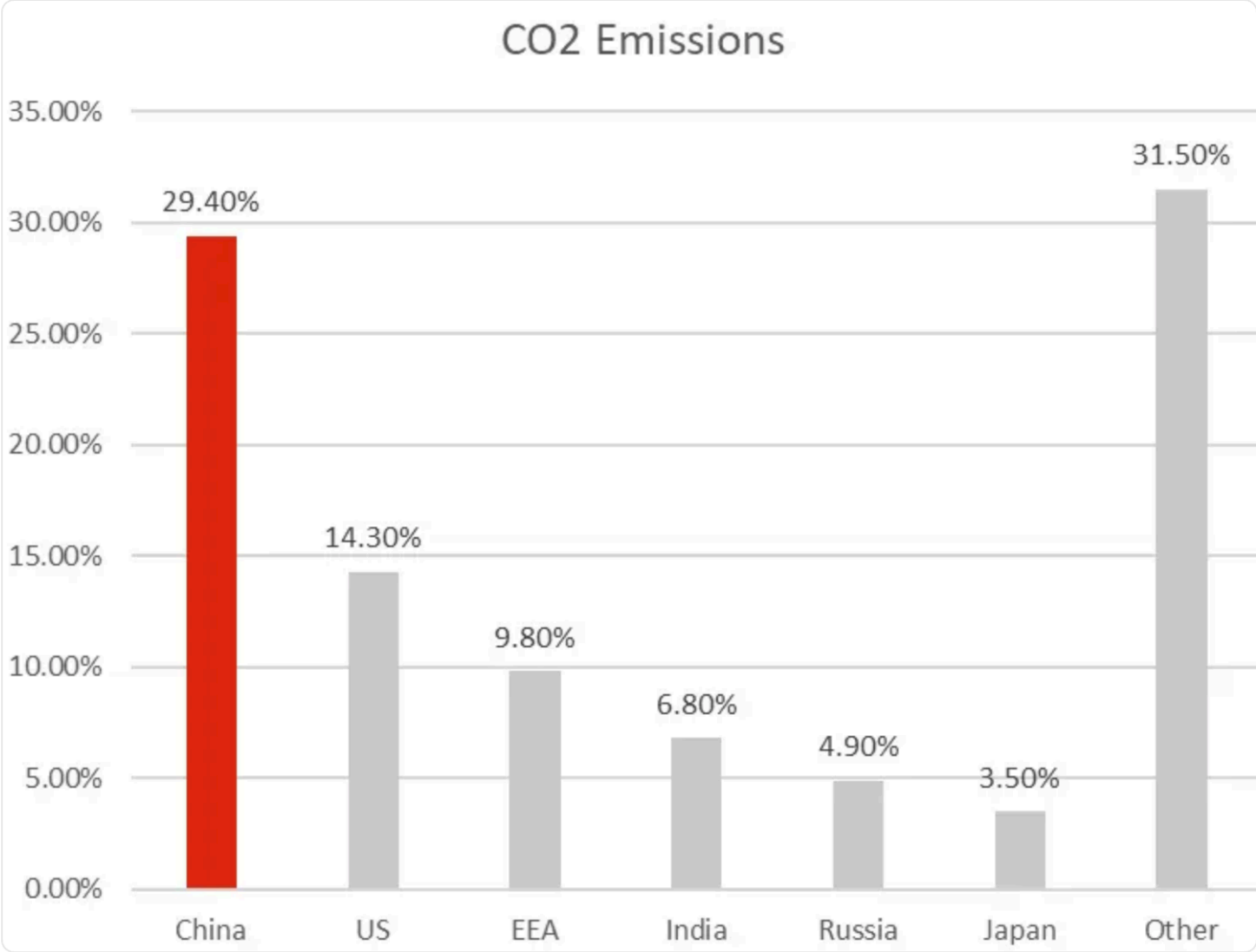
Grouping Risks
Into Categories

What is Wrong with this Chart?



Source: <https://www.polymersearch.com/blog/10-good-and-bad-examples-of-data-visualization>

Guide the Audience towards the Message



Source: <https://www.polymersearch.com/blog/10-good-and-bad-examples-of-data-visualization>

2

Design for Clarity

→ Slides are not documents; they are visual communication tools

Presentation Pitfalls

Too Much Text

This is a Text-Heavy Slide

- **Bullet points are only a good idea** when they call out a small handful of keywords. If your content includes full sentences and paragraphs, your audience will start to gloss over.
- **It is your job to call out key information** – you're giving a presentation, not a reading assignment. People cannot be expected to read through tons of material while also listening to you speak.
- **The brain gets overwhelmed when there are no visual resting points.** Keep enough white space that your content is in focus; wall-to-wall information leads to information overload.



Keywords

Not full sentences



Icons + Other Visuals

Get points across better than words



White Space

Visually balances the slide & lets the eye rest

Presentation Pitfalls

Too Many Colors

Project Phases Planning

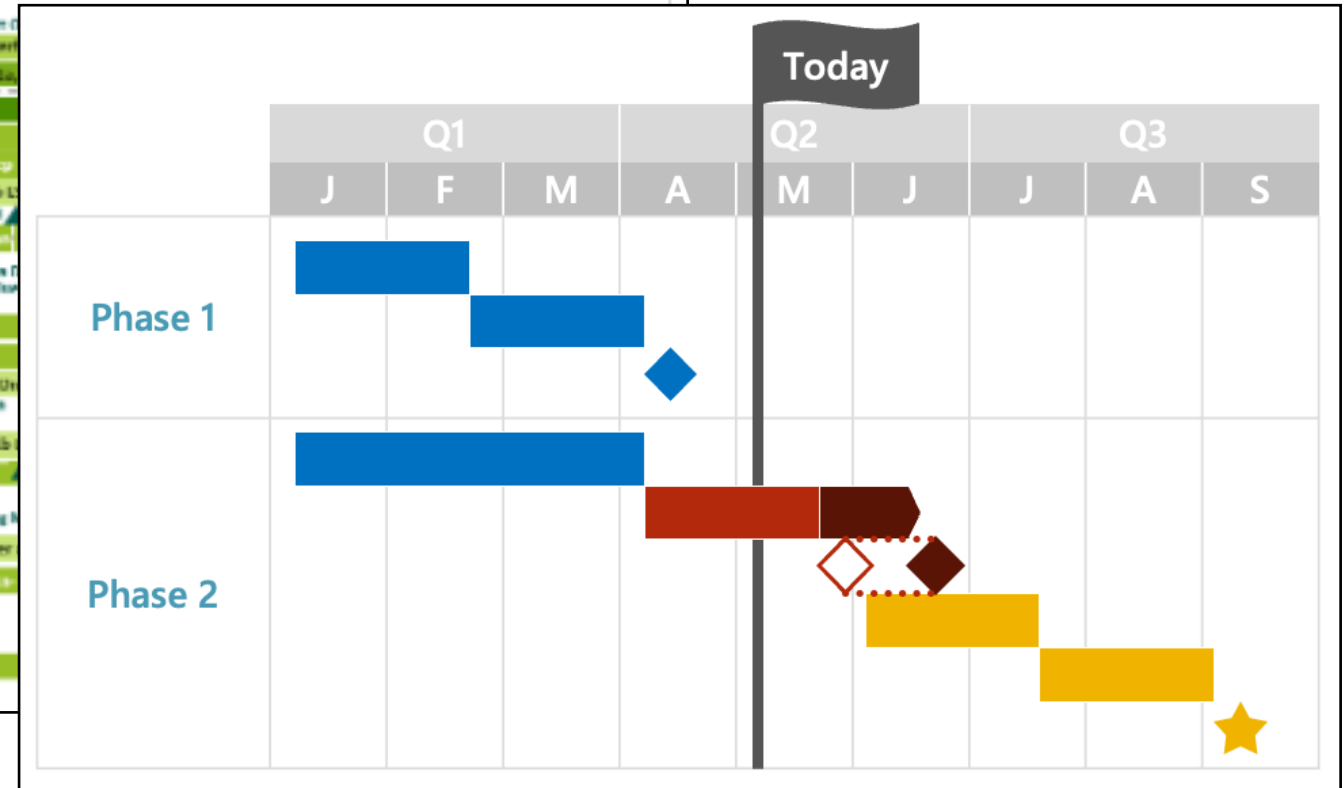
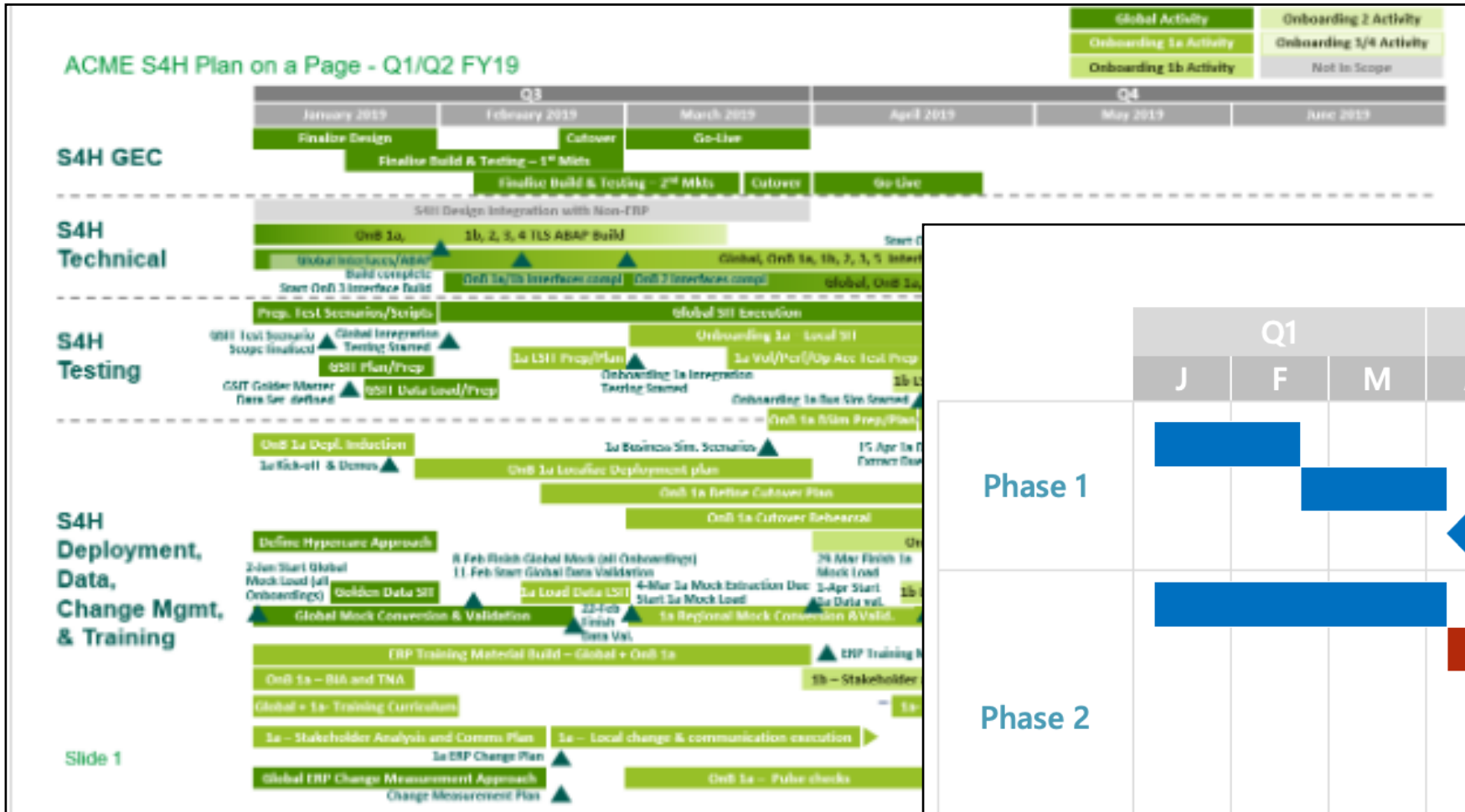


Key Milestones	Completed by	
	4Q 2023	1Q 2024
Developing a detailed project plan, including timelines and resources.	15 Oct	
Reaching milestones in the development of a new product or service.	20 Dec	
Reaching savings, investment, or debt reduction targets.		2 Jan
Building a functional prototype of the product & Ensuring the product meets quality standards.		12 Feb
Reaching key construction milestones like framing, roofing, and finishing.		18 Apr

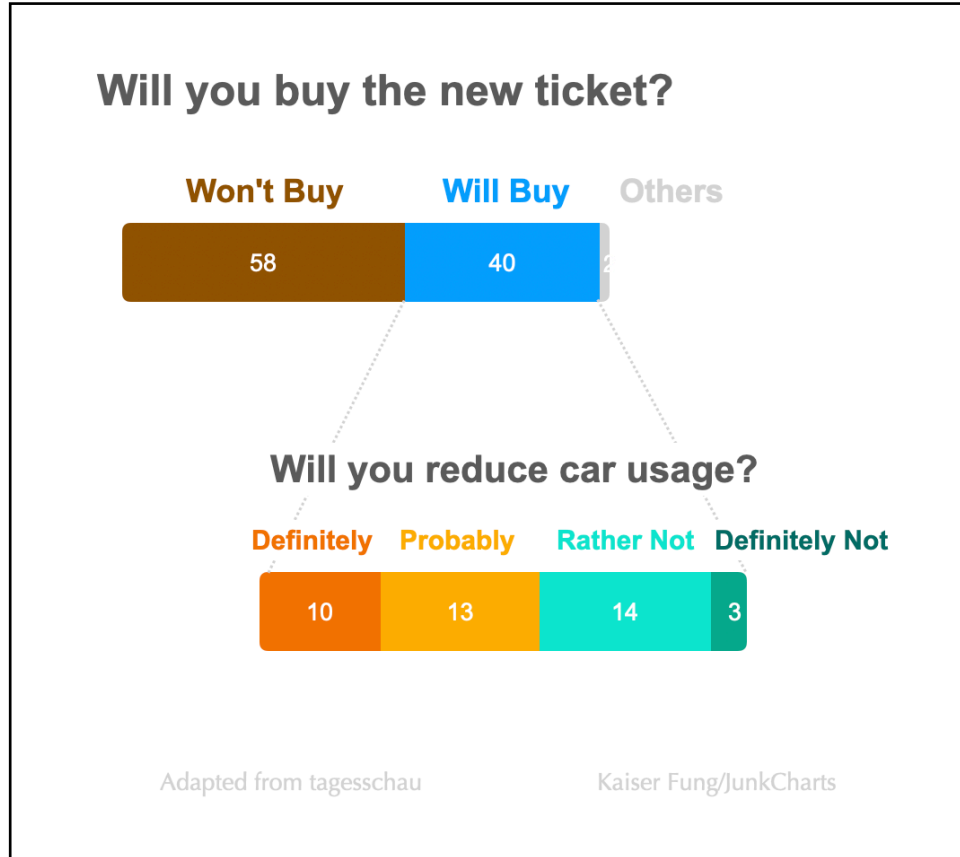
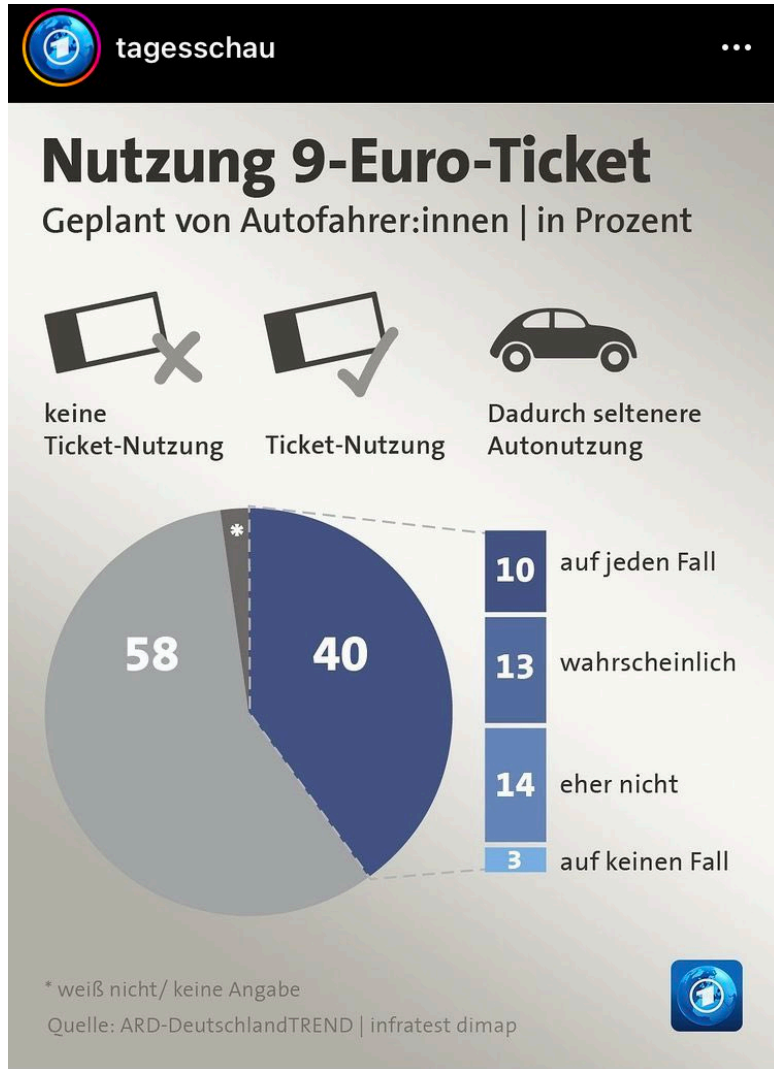
Source: <https://slideuplift.com/blog/bad-powerpoint-slides-examples-to-avoid/>

Presentation Pitfalls

Plan-on-a-Page

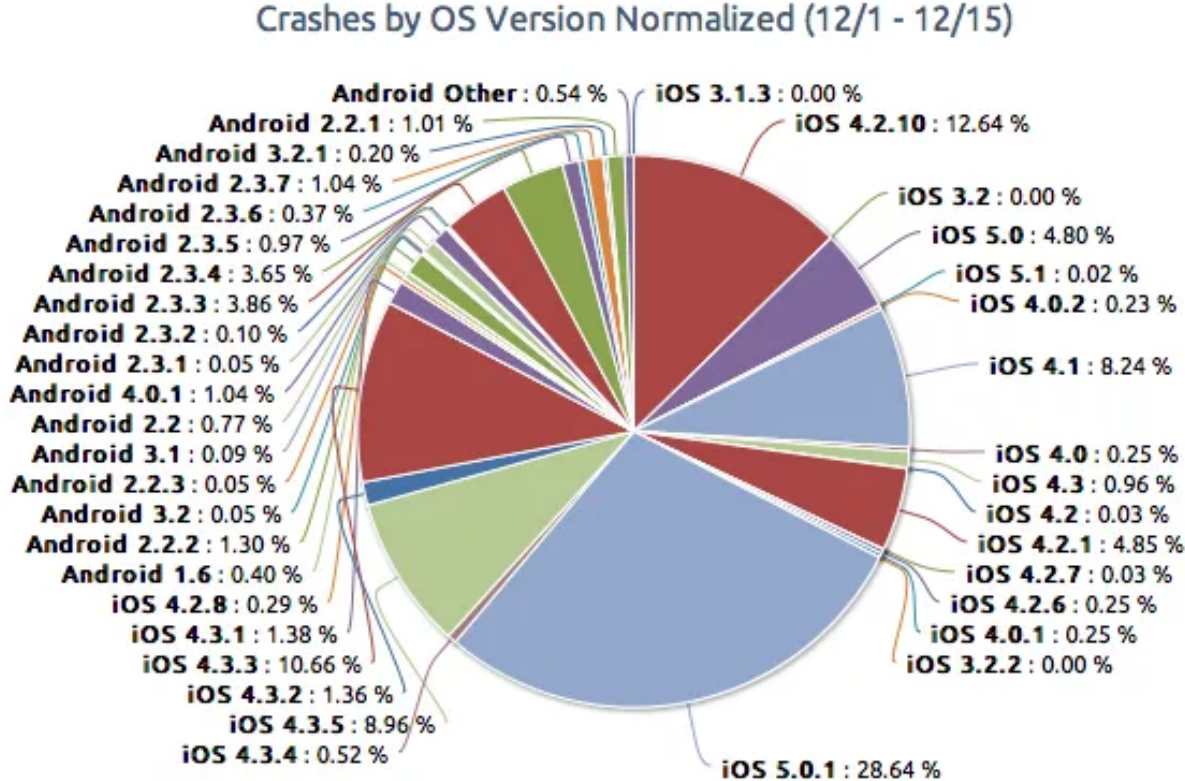


Turning Simple Into Complex

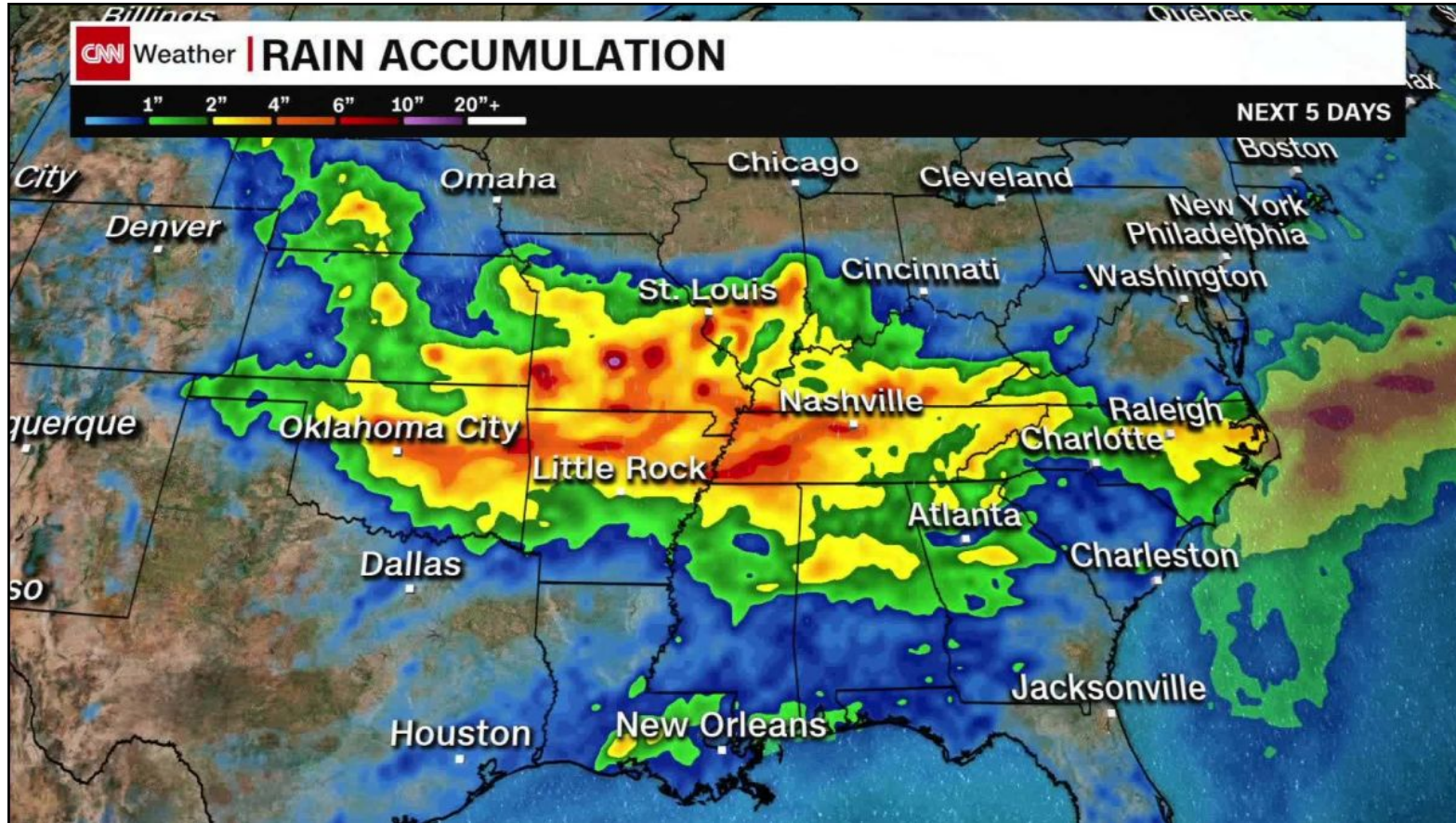


Presentation Pitfalls

Chart Junk



Interesting Data = Relevant Data?



Will it rain today?

NO

30° / 16°

Mostly Clear

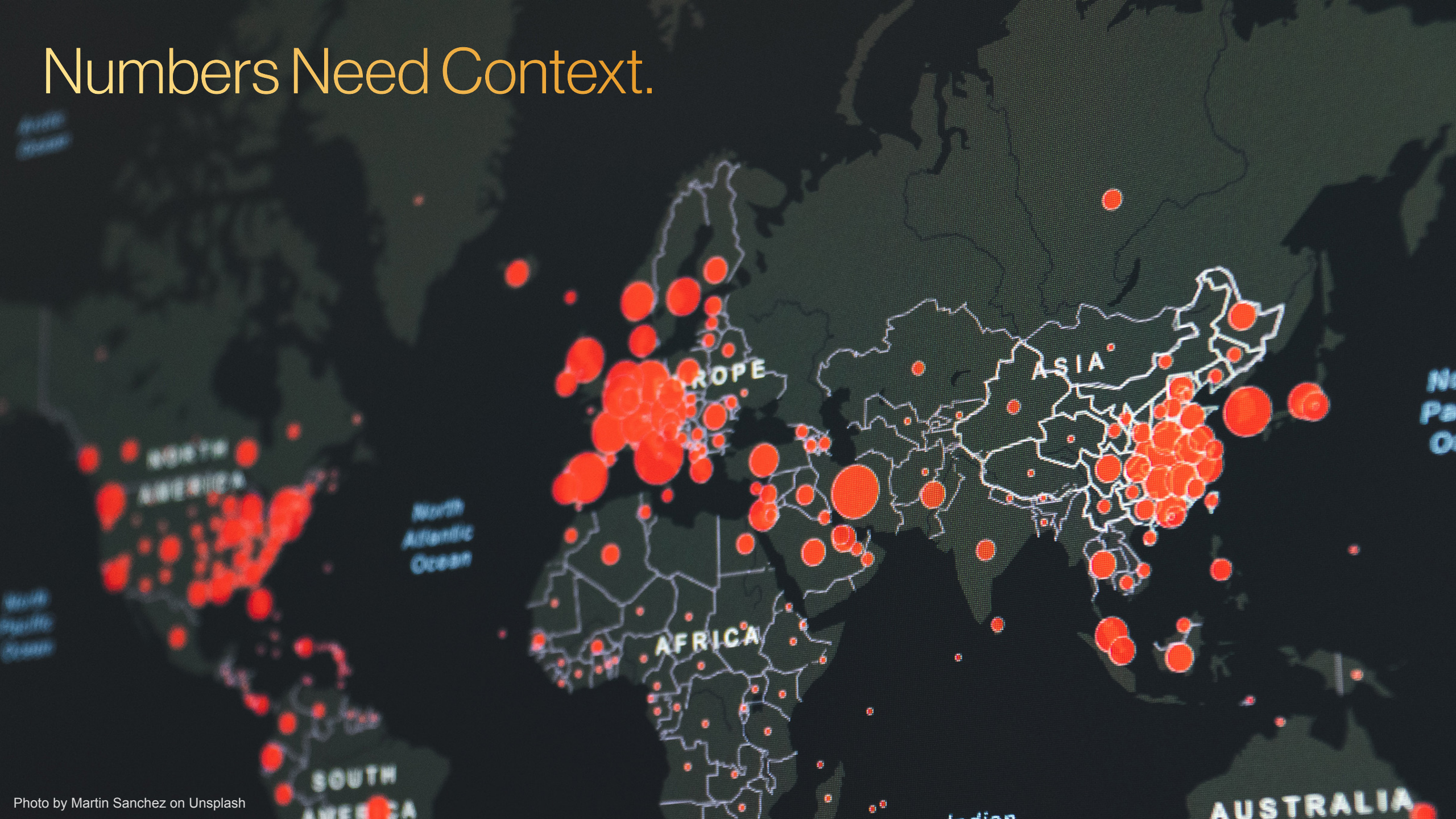
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3

Tell the Data Story

→ Data doesn't speak for itself; you must add narrative

Numbers Need Context.



Duarte's 4 Storytelling Techniques for Data

1. **Hero/Adversary:** Identify the hero and the adversary
2. **Data + Context:** Talk with the people generating the data
3. **Conflict + Solution:** Name the Conflict and How to Solve It
4. **Clear Ask:** Provide Context to Decision-Makers

1. **Hero/Adversary:** Identify the hero and the adversary

Hero: QA/Test team (working hard to validate functionality)

Adversary: Test environment instability causing repeated outages

Message: “Our QA team is pushing hard to hit targets, but they’re being blocked by recurring outages in the test environment.”

2. **Data + Context:** Talk with the people generating the data

“Every time the environment crashes, we lose half a day,” – Lead Tester

3. **Conflict + Solution:** Name the Conflict and How to Solve It

Conflict: Environment outages threaten Go-Live timeline.

Solution: Contract temporary cloud infrastructure to stabilize testing until deployment.

4. **Clear Ask:** Provide Context to Decision-Makers

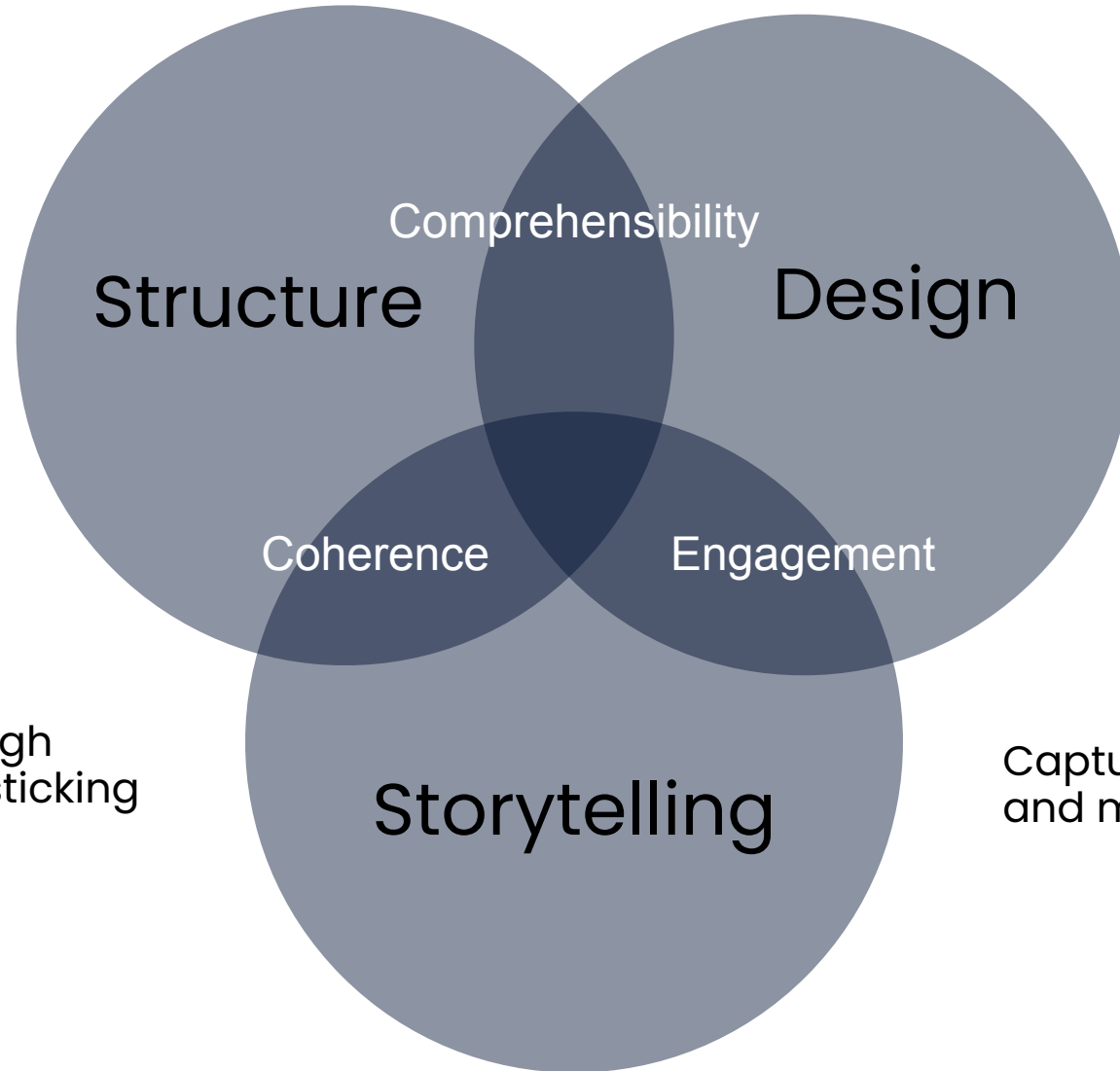
“SteerCo approval needed today to fund temporary infra and avoid schedule slippage”

Duarte's 4 Storytelling Techniques for Data

Project: Internal HR System Upgrade

- **Budget:** +12% overspend (vendor delays and extra consulting)
- **Timeline:** Phase 1 delivered, Phase 2 delayed by 3 weeks
- **Benefits:** 2 of 4 benefits realized (automated reporting, reduced manual approvals)
- **Risks:** 5 open, 1 critical (data migration issue)
- **Stakeholders:** Some end-users frustrated with training (satisfaction 60%), executive sponsor supportive
- **Team:** Morale stable, working overtime to recover schedule

Grasp complex
project data quickly



Structure

Design

Comprehensibility

Coherence

Engagement

Storytelling

Making sense through
logical flow — and sticking
in people's minds.

Capture attention
and motivate action

Thank You!

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Marcus Glowasz
Author "Leading Projects with Data"

